



Book	SW BOCES Policies
Section	3000 - COMMUNITY RELATIONS
Title	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity in Southern Westchester BOCES
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Service is at the core of our work at Southern Westchester BOCES. To serve our students, staff, and community best, we must provide an equitable environment where all feel represented, welcomed, accepted, and embraced. Research shows that all students benefit academically, cognitively, civically, socially emotionally, and economically when schools implement strong diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies and practices. These benefits are realized regardless of a school's location or student and staff demography.

This policy provides a framework as to how Southern Westchester BOCES will foster DEI in its schools. This policy considers the following essential elements: governance; diverse teaching and learning opportunities; student support, discipline, and wellness; workforce diversity; and family and community engagement. This policy is just one component of Southern Westchester BOCES' commitment to maintaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive educational and work environment.

Southern Westchester BOCES will develop a DEI Plan to manage and coordinate the execution of this policy. Questions about this policy may be directed to the Deputy District Superintendent/Chief Operating Officer, Dr. Brendan Lyons.

### **Defining Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity**

For purposes of this policy:

- a) "Diversity" includes but is not limited to race; color; ethnicity; nationality; religion; socioeconomic status; veteran status; education; marital status; language; age; gender; gender expression; gender identity; sexual orientation; mental or physical ability; physical characteristics, and genetic information.
- b) "Equity" includes, but is not limited to, seeking fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all while striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of all groups.
- c) "Inclusivity" includes, but is not limited to, authentically bringing all excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power and ensures equal access to opportunities and resources.

These descriptions are foundational and provided for clarity, but not intended to be exhaustive.

### **Governance**

#### **DEI Committee**

Southern Westchester BOCES will establish a DEI Committee that meets periodically throughout the year. The purpose of the DEI Committee is to assist in creating and implementing plans that advance the BOCES' commitment to maintaining a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment where all individuals feel valued and respected. As needed, the DEI Committee will also review BOCES policies, practices, and programs and offer recommendations to better promote DEI.

Southern Westchester BOCES will actively seek members for the DEI Committee using email, newsletters, the BOCES' website, the BOCES' social media, and/or advertisements.

The DEI Committee should include at least one representative from the following stakeholder groups:

- a) Students;
- b) Parents and persons in parental relation;
- c) BOCES Central Administration
- d) Program/Building administrators;
- e) Teachers;
- f) Clinicians, including at least one school psychologist, social worker, or school counselor;
- g) Other BOCES staff;
- h) The Board; and
- i) Community members.

### **DEI Coordinator**

The District Superintendent will designate a DEI Coordinator. The DEI Coordinator will be a member of the DEI Committee and convene and coordinate the activities and plans.

### **Teaching and Learning**

Southern Westchester BOCES will strive to advance inclusive and culturally responsive teaching and learning through the following means: curricula in all content areas; books and instructional materials; pedagogical practice and professional learning; classroom grouping policies and practices; student support systems for all developmental pathways; equitable opportunities to learn for all students; and multiple assessment measures. As part of this effort, the Southern Westchester BOCES will seek to:

- a) Implement a Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) Education Framework<sup>1</sup> that embeds the ideals of diversity, equity, and inclusivity within student-centered learning environments that:
  - 1. Affirm cultural identities;
  - 2. Foster positive academic outcomes;
  - 3. Develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference;
  - 4. Elevate historically marginalized voices;
  - 5. Empower students as agents of social change; and
  - 6. Contribute to individual student engagement, learning, growth, and achievement through the cultivation of critical thinking.
- b) Develop curricula that incorporate texts, images, and other materials to expose students to multiple and diverse perspectives.
- c) Provide all students with opportunities to learn about and participate in experiences that prepare them for civic engagement and to make contributions to social justice.
- d) Provide all students with opportunities to learn about historical and ongoing injustices and inequalities within the context of the curricula and in an age and developmentally-appropriate manner, and to apply this learning to classroom discussion and other learning activities.

### **Family and Community Engagement**

Southern Westchester BOCES will strive to foster family and community engagement practices that are based on mutual trust and respect. As part of this effort, SWBOCES will seek to:

- a) Encourage all stakeholders to foster and sustain a strong sense of community and belonging by removing barriers to participation and being responsive to the needs of families.
- b) Reduce language barriers by translating communications and utilizing interpreters when appropriate.

- c) Leverage partners such as the county government and local community organizations in developing DEI programs and activities for SWBOCES.

### **Workforce Diversity**

Southern Westchester BOCES will strive to create a diverse and inclusive workforce that recognizes and values peoples' differences. As part of this effort, the BOCES will seek to:

- a) Recruit and retain a diverse workforce in all areas and at all levels that is representative of the student body as well as our surrounding communities, thereby reducing stereotypes and preparing students for an increasingly global society.
- b) Provide staff with opportunities for professional learning related to cultural proficiency

### **Diverse Schools**

Southern Westchester BOCES will strive to promote diverse, equitable, and inclusive classrooms in which all students can access opportunities to learn and realize their full potential. As part of this effort, the BOCES will seek to:

- a) Assure that the use of terms and phrases within SWBOCES' schools does not perpetuate negative stereotypes or minimize student opportunities.
- b) Create coursework, programs, and activities accessible to all students, regardless of their disability status, native language, income level, or any other basis.

### **Student Supports, Discipline, and Wellness**

Southern Westchester BOCES will strive to focus on the well-being of the "whole child". As part of this effort, the BOCES will seek to:

- a) Employ programs and practices that enhance all students' self-identity, self-confidence, and self-esteem.
- b) Maintain non-discriminatory discipline policies and practices and implement restorative practices as a means for addressing interpersonal conflict and student behavioral issues.
- c) Consider and provide support for the full range of student developmental pathways.

### **Professional Learning**

To foster DEI in its schools, Southern Westchester BOCES will provide DEI learning opportunities to staff and students, as appropriate. These learning opportunities may be delivered in various forms including, but not limited to workshops; instructor-led classes; webinars; videos; workbooks; pamphlets; and/or emailed information. Although specific objectives will vary, in general, learning opportunities will be designed to:

- a) Increase awareness of the content of this policy and various DEI issues, and b) Promote a welcoming and inclusive environment for all SWBOCES community members.

Special learning opportunities may be provided to members of the DEI Committee.

### **Notification**

Southern Westchester BOCES will share information about this policy via the SWBOCES website and/or BOCES-wide communications, as appropriate.